



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

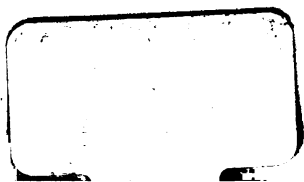
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

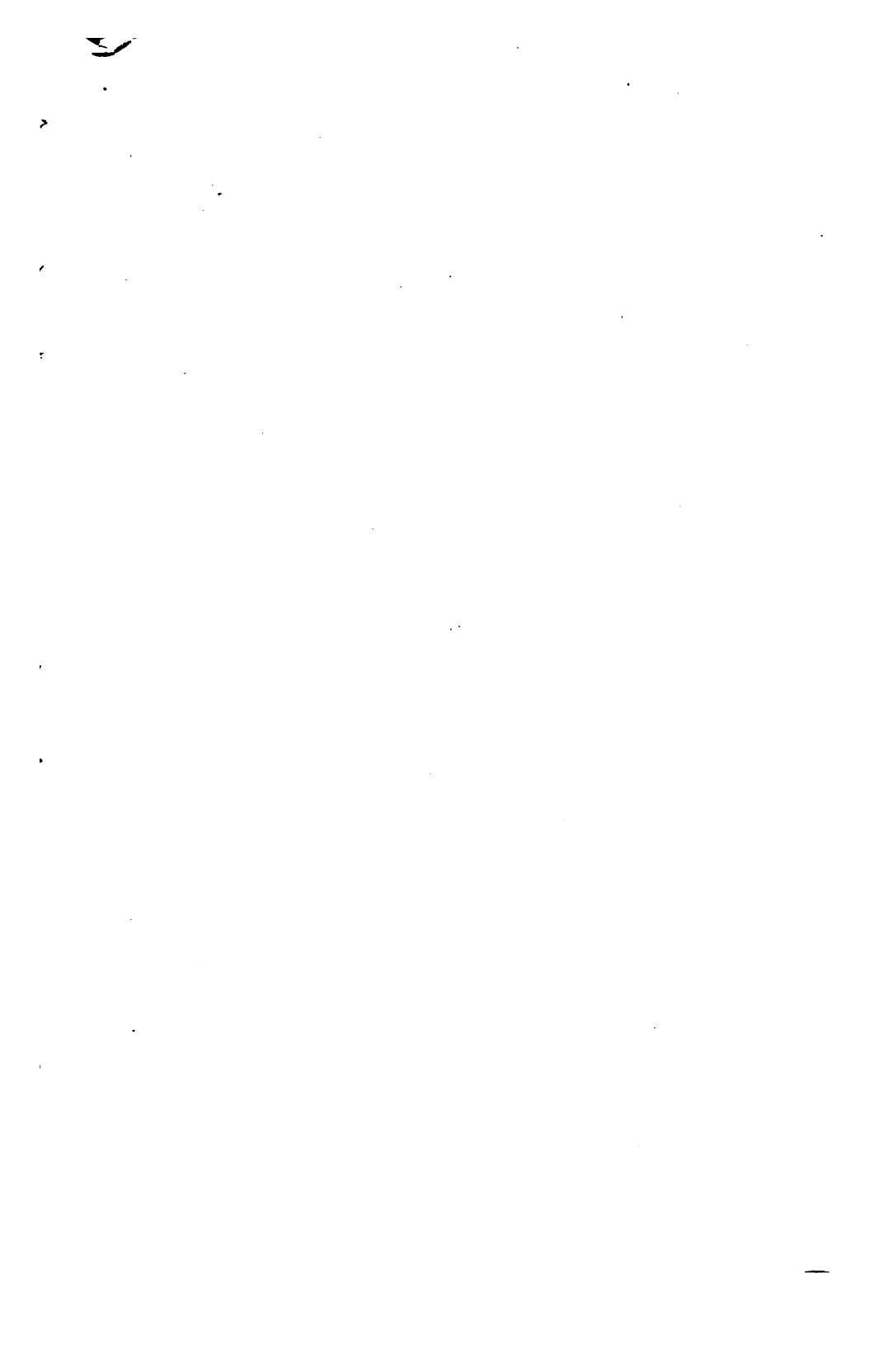
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





(19) H. White
*The Insufficiency of Human Reason
in Matters of Religion, and the
Consequent Necessity of a Reve-
lation.*

A
SERMON

Preach'd before the
UNIVERSITY

At St. *MARY's*

IN

OXFORD,

ON

ACT SUNDAY 1731.

By **BENJAMIN BULKELEY, D. D.**
of *Pembroke College.*

O X F O R D,

Printed at the THEATRE for *Sam. Wilmot*, Book-
seller: and Sold by *J. and J. Knapton*, *R. Knaplock*,
T. Astley, and *J. Crownfield* in *St. Paul's Church-Yard*,
S. Bickerton near *Temple-Bar*, *S. Birt* in *Ave-Mary-*
Lane, and *B. Motte* in *Fleet-Street*, *London.* 1731,

BT
127
A2
B9

THE F B I

English
Hew
4-28-43
47837

[I]



JOSHUA V. 13.

--- *Art thou for us, or for our Adversaries?*

IO argue from the *Testimony* of Revelation, where the *Truth* of it is the matter in controversy, would appear, at first view, to be irregular and absurd: All the use therefore, which I shall make of this Scripture, will be to introduce a discourse upon the *Necessity of Revelation*; by asking *common Reason* the same Question, that *Joshua* ask'd the Angel, in the plains of *Jericho*, *Art thou for us, or for our Adversaries?*

The Enemies of Christianity have at length brought their disputes about it to this Point: *Whether Reason alone be a sufficient Guide in matters of Religion, without the help and Assistance of Revelation?*

Satisfaction in this Inquiry is of great Moment. For if *their* Notion of the Sufficiency of

A

Reason

Reason be found true; and we admit in proof of it what can't be justly deny'd, That God, as Governor of the World, has establish'd a certain Agreement between Means and Ends, Causes and Effects, it will hence follow, That he *must* be conceiv'd to govern the World, according to this order and connexion of Things; and therefore, That he will not use extraordinary Means to bring about natural Ends, nor produce natural Effects by supernatural Causes; but on the contrary will permit Things to work, according to the Powers he has endued them with, so far as they can answer their several Ends. And, as this way of reasoning is true, with regard to God's government of the *Natural World*, the same Will hold good, as to his government of the *Moral World*: And consequently, if it be once admitted, *That Reason alone is a sufficient Guide in matters of Religion, without the help and assistance of Revelation*, it will hence be concluded, That there never has been *One*: Because the Extraordinary Power of God is to be esteem'd very Sacred, not to be brought in or expos'd, without clear and evident Necessity.

Upon which account; and because it is always more reasonable to doubt of, and examine thoroughly into those Things, which are offer'd to us as Principles or Postulata, rather than having hastily granted these, to be Angry afterwards with clear and necessary Deductions, it will behoove us to be very careful in examining and stating this Question; and the more so; because our Adversaries seem to have propos'd it,
with

with some Artifice, and a studied Ambiguity. — Therefore for the right stating of the Question, viz. Whether, in the words of the Text, Reason be really for Us, or for our Adversaries, or, in other words, whether it be able to prove its own Sufficiency, which is what *they* contend for, or whether it must be forc'd to allow the Necessity of a Divine Revelation, which is what *we* maintain — Let it be considered,

That a great Difference ought to be made between the *natural* Power of Reason, and the *contracted* Weakness of it — Between what Reason *might* have discover'd, and what it *actually* did — Between the dark State of it, before Christianity, and its present Condition, under the Light of Revelation. Reason (we grant) when under no delusion or false bias from Lusts or Prejudices; when sedate and free from Passions; when regularly inquisitive, and with pains and care examining into Truths, *may* direct and guide Men to many noble Discoveries: Yet such Improvement of Reason is not so easy and common a Thing.

It must be further acknowledg'd, That some of our Modern Unbelievers have establish'd Virtue upon better Principles, and carry'd the Duties of it to a greater Height, than ever the Heathen were able to reach. But was this owing to the Strength of their own Parts, or to the Assistance of Revelation? To Revelation *certainly*. Do but examine with care any one System of Religion and Morality, which they have thought fit to publish, and You will soon perceive, That
what-

whatever is Wise and Good in it, above the common Standard of the ancient Heathens, either in their Principles or Conclusions, is plainly taken from the Doctrines of Revelation. It is no difficult matter for Men of but moderate Abilities to go to the Bible, and thence pick out some wise and good Rules, and then to shew, how well they agree with Reason, and at last, under a different Form and Disguise of words, To put *them* off triumphantly for their own Discoveries, or as the genuine dictates of Natural Reason. And when this is done artfully; and Reason and Revelation are well mixt and blended together in the same work, it may require some critical pains and skill, so to separate and distinguish them, as to know exactly, whose Image and Superscription each particular bears; and to be able to render unto Reason the things that are Reason's, and unto Revelation the things that are Revelation's. — By this borrow'd light many have seen things, which *Socrates* and *Tully*, and other brave and learned Heathens desir'd to see, but could not see them: Are they therefore greater, than *Socrates* and *Tully*? *Who made them thus to differ? And what have they, that they did not receive?*

It appears then from what has been observed, That to put the *whole Stress* of the Cause upon the *natural power of Reason*, and then, from the *present* Improvements of it under the influence of Revelation, to infer there was no necessity for any Revelation, is a Method of arguing, neither fair nor justifiable: Indeed let the *natural power* of

of Reason be as great, as they contend for; yet it has but little Concern in the present Question; which *should* be consider'd, in the same manner, as we judge of the Usefulness, and Necessity of Laws; the only Measure of which judgment is the *greatness* of the evils, that they remedy or prevent: So that to determine aright in this debate, we must take in all Circumstances; and examine *particularly*, what was the State of the World, when Jesus came into it: — And then the Question will stand thus — *Whether Reason alone, without the help and assistance of Revelation, was sufficient to reform the World, as the Circumstances of it then were, when Christianity appear'd?*

The Question being thus fairly stated; our next Step, in order to prove, *That Reason alone was not sufficient to reform the World, without the help and assistance of Revelation*, must be to inquire, under what *Circumstances* Mankind then was, when Christianity appear'd.

And I shall consider this part of our Proposition, both with regard to the *Religion*, and the *Morality* of the Heathen World.

Religion in general being the Service of the true God in a true Way, according to his Nature, and suitably to his Perfections, the first Foundation of it *must* be laid in right Notions of God. — But how *necessary* soever this Knowledge be, 'tis plain from History, there was little of it to be found in the Heathen World. What Notion *they* had of their Gods will soon appear, whether we consider their Number, their Condi-

Condition, or the Manner of their Worship. Not to be too particular in this Inquiry, I shall only observe, That the Number of them according to *Hesiod's* account was very great, according to *Varro* much greater; and *Pliny* tells us in his Natural History, that, by each Person's adopting a several Deity of his own, he thought the Number of them to be multiply'd above that of Men. Add to this, That if we consider them as diversified according to their several Divisions into National, Provincial, City and Family-Deities, This too as it may serve to shew us that their Number was very *great*, so may it convince us at the same time that their Influence and Power was, in the opinion of their Votaries, but very *small*.

Strange and amazing Weakness and Stupidity in Man, when employing his Naked unassisted Reason to search into the Nature and Attributes of God! By what an absurd and perverse kind of reasoning is he brought to Limit and confine the Deity in those Instances in which he ought to conceive It as absolutely Boundless and Infinite, and to Extend and enlarge his Conceptions in *that* single One, in which he ought to apprehend It, as most simple, or under the greatest Limitation (if I may be allow'd to speak so) I mean Its Number or Unity!

If the Multitude of their Deities was trifling and ridiculous, their qualities, and the manner of their worship was odious and horrid.

They complimented those persons with the Titles of Gods, who had distinguish'd themselves
by

by nothing, so much as by their *wickedness*, from the common Rank of Men; Fancying *them* to be dignified, after death, with the Divine Nature, who in their Life-time were a scandal and reproach to the Human; and were so far from having escaped, that they were plunged more deeply than Ordinary in the Pollutions which are in the World through Lust. Thus from being infamous and Notorious as *Practisers*, many were advanc'd, honour'd, and ador'd as *Patrons* of their respective vices; and have been worshipped for those very Crimes in *Another World*, for which, in a well order'd State of things, they would have been judged unworthy to have lived in *This*.

All this was Scandalous and Sottish to the last degree. But the effusion of human Blood, in the Service of their Gods, was beyond measure cruel and barbarous: And yet had this unnatural Practise well nigh spread it self over the face of the Whole Earth.

Such was the State of the Heathen World, with regard to Religion. Nor was this the Case only of the ancients and more barbarous Nations, but of the later and more refin'd People of *Greece* and *Italy*. Upon such Notions of their Deities, what consistent Scheme of Religion could be erected, worthy of the divine or human Nature? Nay, what could possibly arise from them, but a Worship precarious, inconsistent, earthly, sensual, devilish. If there appear'd among them any wise and good Men (as who denies there were Some?) who had escaped
the

the Corruption that was in the world through the Gods whom they worshipped; this must be ascrib'd to some other cause, not to their Religion; which was much apter to corrupt and depress, than to improve and exalt its Votaries.

Nor was the *Morality* of the Heathen World (which is the next thing to be consider'd) in a much better Condition. — There is such a dependence and connexion between religious Notions and moral Practice, as is between a Foundation and its Superstructure: Where the one is faulty and ruinous, the other can't be upright and lasting: And You may almost as reasonably expect to see a *Town* built in the Ocean, and supported by the continual rolling of the waves under it, as ever hope for a steady and abiding Morality, without the foundation and support of the worship of the true God. In proof of this Observation, I shall here offer *St. Paul's* description of Heathen Morality, whom I now quote barely as an Historian. — *As they did not like, says he, to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things, which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despitesful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.*

I might prove and support every branch of this charge of our Apostle, by the Testimonies of

of *Pliny, Seneca, Tacitus, Suetonius*, and others, if it were at all proper, or needfull to produce them, before this learned Auditöry.

How all this Evil of Error, and Sin, and Misery, got dominion in the World is a Point that concerns the article about divine Providence, and no part of our present Inquiry: Here we have found it to have been: and the Question is, How came it to be remov'd? It is clear from the nature of things, that it could not be done, but by a *Reformation*. And thus must have been effected, either by *Reason*, or *Revelation*. Any third way can't be found out.

The proposition we undertook to prove was — *That Reason alone, without the help and assistance of Revelation, was not sufficient to reform the World, as the Circumstances of it then were, when Christianity appear'd.* — That part of it, which relates to the *Circumstances* of the Heathen World, has already been made out from History, which is the only proof, of which a distant matter of Fact is capable. And this we considered under two Heads, that of their Religion, and the other of their Morality.

I shall now apply my self to what remains, and endeavour to shew, *That Reason alone was not sufficient to reform the World, as to these two Particulars*: The Consequence of which will be, *That a Revelation was necessary.*

And here I shall pass over the common Bulk of Mankind as incapable of giving any assistance to the work, and of making their way to Truth, through the press and crowd of Errors that had

encompass'd them; which had been long fix'd and settled in their minds, by the strength of appetites and vices, passions and prejudices — All which are enemies to the rational powers, strong and turbulent. A Man need only consult the present Temper and Constitution of the World, to be convinc'd, how Unfit *they* are for the discovery or propagation of Knowledge, who are either immers'd in the pleasures, or much involv'd in the affairs of Life.

The discovery of Truth, and advancement of Knowledge, are the products of leisure, and solitude, freedom from business, and thoughts undisturbed. So that, if any Reformation of the world could be wrought out by Reason alone, we may expect to meet with it among the Philosophers, who had all the advantages of Ability, Education, Learning and Retirement.

But there were many things necessary for the Reformation of Religion (which is the particular we are now upon) that the Philosophers could by no means discover, or promote.

There can be no true Religion, without the Knowledge of the one true God. This Principle is confess'd by our Adversaries. But such knowledge was too difficult and excellent for *unassisted* Man to attain unto. — The elder *Pliny* gives this character of *Tully*, *That he had a wit equal to the Greatness of the Roman Empire*. To this extensive Genius were added all the advantages of Education, the best Instructors, an incredible Industry, and singular Diligence. He had travell'd over great part of the known World,
in

in search after learning, and had brought home with him the choice of the treasure of each country. From a great Genius, so improv'd and cultivated, we may expect all the Light of discovery, that it was possible for Art and Nature to strike out; especially, when in the vigour and maturity of his Parts he had set himself upon a Subject, in his own judgement of the greatest importance, and which, he says, had never yet been sufficiently explain'd; and wherein therefore (such was his known thirst of Glory) we may fairly suppose him to have put forth all his mighty strength to excell — Yet, after all, what of *Certainty* did this Prodigy of a Man produce? he was forc'd to own himself master'd by the difficulty and obscurity of his Question about the nature of the Gods, and *mibi Balbi disputatio ad Veritatis Similitudinem videtur esse propensor*, was the whole result of his painfull and learned Inquiry.

In the Tract it-self, he recites and confutes the various and different Opinions of no less than four or five and twenty Philosophers; and These; not your little, *minute, de-plebe-philosophers*, but Men of the first Class and order — Such as were the brave and noble *Socrates, Plato, Aristotle*, and the like: — But why did he not, it may be said, select materials out of all this plenty and variety of Sentiments, to compose a right Notion of his own, and rectify their mistakes by one common Truth? This he saw to be necessary, but was not able to do it: So far he went, as to say, *'Tis possible, doubtless, that None*
of

of these Opinions may be true ; but it is certainly impossible, that more than One should be true. — It may hence therefore fairly be concluded, That what could not be discover'd by the united Reason of all these great Men, with Tully at the head of them, could not be discover'd by human Reason ; and consequently, That a Revelation was necessary for the Reformation of the World, as to the first branch of Religion, the knowledge of the one true God.

But to put this matter beyond the reach and power of Cavil — Suppose the difficulty, we just now urged, to be got over ; and that some luckier Philosophers had hit upon a right Notion of the one true God ; and (which is another branch of Religion, and of great difficulty) had by searching found out the true way of serving him, according to his nature, and suitably to his perfections ; and, that there might be no Impediment for want of Labourers in the work, suppose farther, there had been a sufficient Number of these able Men, in every corner of the Earth ; all of them endu'd with a suitable degree of Zeal and Goodness, to go about, and teach all Nations : suppose them to have met with no opposition or disturbance, either from the Old Philosophers, or from the civil powers of each country ; and moreover, that they might wholly intend this one thing, Let us imagine them to have been competently furnish'd, wherever they were to go, with the necessaries and conveniencies of life (which Suppositions singly taken are but barely possible) yet to concede as
far

far as we can; Let them *All* be presum'd to meet, and concur in this Work — And, upon the whole, what will be the Consequence? The Reformation of Religion must still have remain'd unfinish'd; and that, from this single Consideration; because it was impossible for unassisted Reason with all its most improv'd and boasted privileges, and after all its most inquisitive and Laborious Searches, ever to have discover'd or found out, what *that* Satisfaction was, which was proper to be offer'd to Divine Justice for a World of Sinners, and upon what Terms and Conditions They might expect to be reconcil'd and accepted.

I would here intreat You further to observe with me, That the several Founders of Heathen Religion had all of them pretended to have receiv'd *theirs* from Heaven; It had been confirm'd by *Oracles*; and the Oracles were esteem'd by the People, as the Voice of God: — Nor is it pertinent to say, That their Oracles were but *Delusions*; for till it was made clear to *them* that they were *such*, it comes to the same thing, and they *must* have had the same effect and power upon the Mind as if they had been really true, and from God: So that had there been no Metaphysical Abstruseness in the doctrines to be proved, and no difficulty at all, for Men brought up, and wholly conversant in *sensible* Objects, to have conceiv'd aright of things *Spiritual* and abstracted; yet had they a sufficient reply to all the Conviction that could *possibly* have been offer'd to them — “Are we to hearken to the
“Words

"Words of You *Men*, rather than to the words "of *God*? Is *Your* Wisdom greater than *His*? Were Questions, in *their* Case, unanswerable by human Reason; and which for-ever would have barred up the way to Truth, against all the arguments and persuasions of any Charmer, charm'd he never so wisely. — Nothing could possibly have surmounted this *one* difficulty, but what at length actually did, viz. — A Visible demonstration of the *Superior* power of the true God.

Thus have we discover'd the Insufficiency of Reason alone to reform the *Religion* of the Heathen World, and the consequent necessity of Revelation.

It remains, That we make the same evident, with regard to it's *Morality*; and then we shall have fully prov'd every part of the proposition at first laid down.

We are now to consider — *Whether Reason alone was sufficient to reform the Morality of the World, as the State of it then was, when Christianity appear'd?*

Whatever could be done for the attainment of this End, must have been done, either by the force and influence of *publick Laws*, or by the means and advantages of *private Institution*. But there were difficulties in both these ways of Reformation, above the reach and power of human Reason to surmount.

No Body of Laws can be sufficient to reform the *Manners* of a corrupt and degenerate World, but what is complete and perfect; able to direct and oblige Men, as far as it concerns their Happiness,

piness, to the performance of Duty; by commanding things honest; and forbidding the contrary, under the proper enforcement of Rewards and Penalties. But no *human Laws* can possibly constitute such a complete and perfect Rule of Morality. To pretend to it, is neither agreeable to the *Power*, nor proportionate to the *End*, for which all human Legislators are suppos'd to act; The *external* peace and good of the Community is the proper business, and full extent of *their* Authority. As to the *internal* acts of virtues and vices — over these, it is plain; they have no dominion at all either *directive* or *coercive*.

Of the Laws of Men indeed we may affirm with the Apostle, *That they were made for the Lawless and disobedient* — that is, were design'd to restrain all outward Acts of fraud and violence! — But of the Law of the Lord only may we affirm, *That it is an undefiled Law converting the Soul; And of his Statutes alone, That they are true and righteous altogether.*

Since then the Civil Magistrate can take no cognizance of the *internal* acts of the Mind, and it would be altogether useless and ineffectual, for any Power to command or forbid by a Law, what it can neither reward nor punish; it hence follows, *That no human Laws, how wisely so ever contriv'd, can be an adequate Means to the End we are in search of; and consequently, That Reason alone, as to this particular Exercise of it, was not sufficient to reform the Morality of the World.*

Such

Such are the necessary defects, and natural Impotency of human Laws in general. — I might to this add other difficulties *peculiar* to the State of the Heathen World. *Solon* and *Lycurgus* are deliver'd down to us, as the best Lawgivers of Antiquity: — And yet, what unjust, what unreasonable, what impious Laws, did these wise Men enact? So far were they from promoting the real Interests of Virtue and Morality, that there was scarce any one egregious Wickedness, but what had the favour and maintenance of their Laws. This having been the case of the Heathen World, as is evident from History, — What power could human Reason exert sufficient to deliver it from this Law of Sin? More especially — as it fell in with, and was agreeable to another corrupt Law, that in the members, warring against the Law in the Mind, and perpetually soliciting Men to think, they might do *Reasonably*, whatever they could do *Legally*.

Seeing the Inability of publick Laws for the Reformation of the World was so notoriously great, we are next to examine, what help and furtherance might have been contributed towards it, by the means and benefit of *private Institution*.

It is here suppos'd, by way of objecting to the necessity of Revelation, That some wise and thinking Men might have lookt into the nature and Principles of things, and have thence deduced and taught such a perfect Scheme of Morality, as would have corrected all that had been amiss, and prov'd a sufficient foundation for the

Virtue

Virtue and Happiness of the World. Now this Hypothesis how taking and plausible soever, at first appearance, is wholly fancifull and groundless. For in fact, there never was such a System of Morality extant in the Heathen World, (as witness the vast Variety of Opinions among the Philosophers) nor was it possible, in the nature of things, that there ever could have been Any. The Reason is; because in the Argument before us, the *Constitution of Things* and the *Will of God* are but different expressions of the same Idea; now the *Will* of God can't be discover'd, without a competent knowledge of the *Nature of God*: Since then it has been before prov'd, That the Heathen World was grossly ignorant of the *Nature of God*, it will therefore follow, That they must have been proportionately ignorant of the reason and *Constitution of Things*; and consequently, Men of the most refin'd and exalted Understandings could never have drawn from thence any consistent Scheme of Morality, that would have been sufficient to correct what was amiss, and to lay a firm foundation for the Virtue and Happiness of the World. — But to pass over this Difficulty: Let it be granted, That some one or other Sect of Philosophers had discover'd a sufficient Rule of life and Manners, and that all the rest would have given up their several favourite Systems, and have join'd heartily in teaching and propagating the New-Philosophy: — Yet what were *they* among so many Millions of Men? As drops in the Ocean: For look how wide the East is from the West, so far

C distant

distant and disproportionate were the Means and the End: A *World* to be reform'd, and a *Few* Philosophers to reform it!

But to suppose away this difficulty likewise, and many others, that might be mention'd — Let us give them a *sufficient number* of Philosophers for carrying on the work, and see, what this Concession will bring to pass.

There can be no Reformation by *any* Rule of life and Manners, without an Obedience paid to it; but there can be no Obedience, without Knowledge; nor any Knowledge, without Attention; nor could any sufficient Attention be expected without a proper Authority to excite and command it; and no Authority can be sufficient for this purpose, but what has a direct and immediate power over the Heart and Conscience; and this is the Prerogative of God *only*: From which considerations put together, it is evident, That, *a divine Authority being wanted*, Reason alone was not sufficient to reform the Morality of the World, as the Circumstances of it then were, when Christianity appear'd; *therefore a Revelation was necessary*.

After having fairly stated the Question to be discuss'd, and given an Account of the Circumstances of the Heathen World, both as to its Religion, and Morality; and having demonstrated, under each of these Heads, from the reason and nature of things, and from the Testimony of History, *That it was impossible for Reason alone, without the help and assistance of Revelation, to reform the World, as the Circumstances of it then were, when Christianity appear'd:* And

And having done this in a plain and direct way, *keeping strictly to the single Point of the Necessity of Revelation*, without so much as mentioning either the Expediency, Probability, Characters, or Advantages of the Christian Revelation (all which are Arguments good and strong:)

After a proceeding thus fair and honest, I may have liberty to say of this Question of our Adversaries (especially as they put it) That it is very captious and designing; that it tends only to Disputacity and Scepticism; has more of cunning and Sophistry, than of Wisdom and Fair-dealing; and is, in truth, fitter to be rejected, than argued. And of this they *themselves* must be sensible. They don't deny that the Historical Matters of Fact are true, by which Christianity is establish'd: But these Facts are of such a nature, that they cannot be *True*, if the Revelation be not of God: Either then God has made a Revelation, when there was no *Necessity* for it (which to assert, in this case, is little less than blasphemy) or else human Reason, without it, was Insufficient for the Happiness and Reformation of the World. This argument is so plain and obvious, that we can scarce think but they must have seen it. And therefore, for such Men to raise cavils and objections to the *Reality of a Revelation*, upon a false and frivolous pretence of its having been *Unnecessary*, is a way of reasoning not to be hearkned to, bold and fallacious.

Which being ultimately founded upon the *bare Possibility* of what *might* have been done by
the

the powers of Reason, I shall search a little further into the nature and consequence of this pretended Argument.

Possibility, as it is only a Result from this proposition, That it is *not impossible* but such or such a Thing *may* be true, *can* be of no other service in any dispute, than merely to prepare the way for *Proof*; by shewing the passage to be clear and open, not obstructed or block'd up by any flat and positive *Contradiction*. For, if possibility be once admitted as a Proof, we may then undertake, by the help of this Invention, to prove any thing: *To prove the same thing to be, and not to be, at the same time*; as will clearly appear from the following Instance. It is *possible* for the City of *Rome* to be now in Flames: It is *possible* likewise for the City of *Rome* not to be now in Flames: Now if *Possibility* be of force to affirm or deny any Proposition, there will be proof *equally good* on both sides of the Question; and then it will follow, That the City of *Rome* is *now* in Flames, and not in Flames; which to assert is the most gross and palpable Contradiction.

If a Prisoner at the bar should have been convicted of a crime by all the positive Testimony, that could be brought to the support of any Matter of Fact — Would an Advocate, after all this light of evidence given in to the Court, still continue to plead in his behalf, and endeavour to prove the Man not Guilty, because 'tis *possible* he *might* have preserv'd his Innocence? Or, if the Advocate should be found so Hardy and